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Tablets for teacher educators: a phenomenographic study of teacher educators' use of iPad and Galaxy Tabs in the UK Lifelong Learning Sector



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ATEE Winter Conference, University of
Genoa, Mar 2013

Background

- Consortium for PCET – partnership - ITE in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) between University of Huddersfield and 24 FE colleges
- Capital expenditure distributed across the partnership; shift to tablet PCs
- Distributed in Spring 2011 (One of each per centre)
- Steering Committee required an evaluation of use

The Study

- Outcomes of the initial survey revealed a clear distinction in the use of the technology that seemed to be related to the perception of the advantages and limitations rather than the actual facilities.
- These ranged from those who :
 - 1) responded to the challenges of technology and were able to harness it;
 - 2) were interested in using the technology but needed considerable support;
 - 3) used the technology for personal use only;
 - 4) were overwhelmed by the actual or perceived barriers and resigned themselves to non-use.

Approach

Phenomenographic approach – identifies the similarities/differences between the ways people experience or see a phenomenon

Experiences and conceptions of teacher educators who were involved in the deployment of equipment

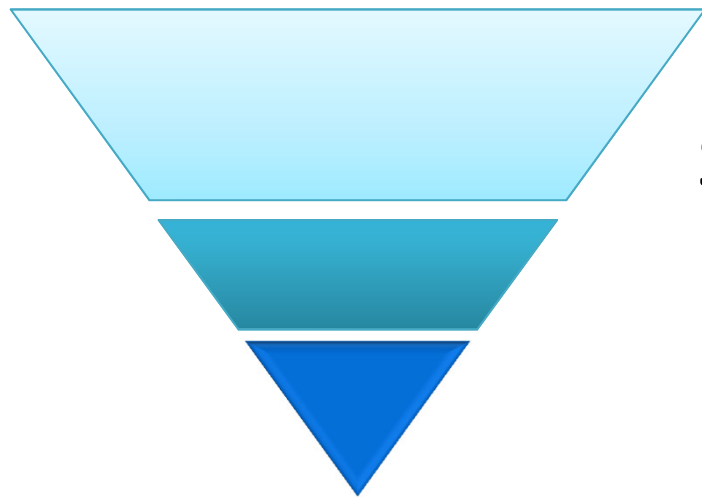
Contrast to phenomenology - understanding the meaning that people give to their every day experiences, to gain a deeper understanding of 'it'.

Methodology

- Initial survey - results used to determine focus of questions.
- Interviews – semi-structured. Undertaken by 2 people (one joint). Pilot interview.
- Total of 9 – 2 not centre managers
- Transcriptions. Professional transcriber used.
- Analysis – careful to differentiate from phenomenology.

Analysis

First layer of coding



Second coding – in relation to identified issues from survey

Third layer – common emerging issues that relate to their experiences as teacher educators and their use of IT in FETT

Summary of results

1. Use of tabs – small hesitant steps.
2. No evidence of technological determinism
3. Evidence of aspirations for future use
4. Support from institutions – varied but improvements c.f to 2011
5. Laptops – used differently; smartphones – becoming accepted as a learning tool
6. IT in FETT – essential to use with trainees for the course and to prepare them to use with their learners

Variations

Using the results we can identify 4 categories of IT use by the teacher educator in FE
(after Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007)

Variations



1. The Brave – challenges the institution – operationally and philosophically. Leads from the front.

Variations



2. The Follower – appreciates the challenges, identifies the developments and takes these up. Delegates to a ‘specialist’?

Variations



3. The Cautious Adopter – mainly individual use or admin until they feel more comfortable. Will learn from the trainees.

Variations



4. The Reluctant – accepts barriers; hesitates to challenge.

Explosion

The metaphor of the explosion - the experience of most of those interviewed. Not a hierarchical relationship.



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Further thoughts

Teacher educators need to:

- Develop a personal strategy alongside the institutional vision / strategy
- Support for innovation beyond direct training
- Consider issues when introducing an initiative to a teaching and learning system

References

Larsson, J. & Holmström, I. (2007) 'Phenomenographic or phenomenological analysis: does it matter? Examples from a study on anaesthesiologists' work', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 2(1), pp. 55-64 [online] Available from: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17482620601068105>> [Accessed 15 January 2013].